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ABSTRACT

This publication was created to broaden teachers', parents', administrators', and community leaders' visions of a school's potential. Teachers, librarians, state school board members, and other school professionals share their ideas and examples of successful implementations of various ideas beyond the confines of the traditional school. It includes a planning section containing seven assignments designed to assist an individual or group in discovering their own personal vision of the ideal school. The work is constructed to affect school improvement at every level by encouraging readers to envision their "Dream School," and to pursue their high expectations and goals in an active manner. (DFR)

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SHARING SUCCESS

Designing the School of Your Dreams

ED 440 435

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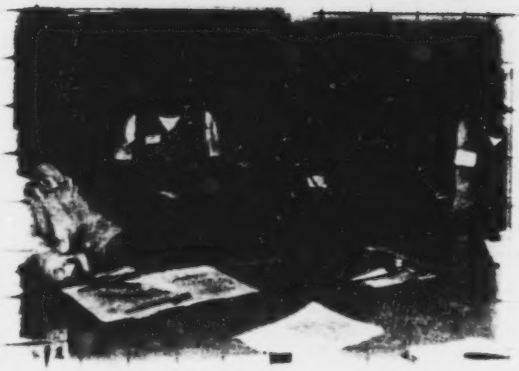

"I always admired my high school teachers."

"I was forced into teaching in an emergency situation, but when I saw a gleam of understanding in a special education child, I didn't want to leave."

"I have the gift of enthusiasm, and I believe I can share it with children."

Why did you go into teaching?

"I'm the oldest of eight children, so I've been teaching all my life."

"Once I saw 13- and 14-year-olds that didn't want to learn, and I realized there wasn't anything I'd rather do than teach."

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Designing the School of Your Dreams

A 1998 Sharing Success Publication

By SERVE
The SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education

Associated with the School of Education
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

The SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education
Associated with the School of Education
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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About the SERVE Organization

SERVE, the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education, is an educational organization whose mission is to promote and support the continual improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. To address the mission, SERVE engages in research and development in educational issues of critical importance to educators in the region and in the provision of research-based services to SEAs and LEAs which are striving for comprehensive school improvement. Committed to a shared vision of the future of education in the region, the organization is governed by a board of directors that includes the chief state school officers, governors, and legislative representatives from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and representatives of teachers and the private sector.

SERVE's core component is a Regional Educational Laboratory funded since 1990 by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. SERVE has additional major funding from the Department in the areas of Migrant Education and School Leadership and is the lead agency in the Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Consortium for the Southeast and the Southeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR◆TEC). Based on these grants and contracts, SERVE has developed a system of programs and initiatives that provides a spectrum of resources, services, and products for responding to local, regional, and national needs. These program areas are

- Program on Assessment, Accountability, and Standards
- Program for Children, Families, and Communities
- Program on Education Policy
- Program for the Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education
- Program on School Development and Reform
- Program on Technology in Learning

SERVE's National Specialty Area is Early Childhood Education, and the staff of SERVE's Program for Children, Families, and Communities is developing the expertise and the ability to provide leadership and support to the early childhood community nationwide for children from birth to eight years old.

In addition to the program areas, the SERVE Evaluation Department supports the evaluation activities of the major grants and contracts and provides evaluation services to SEAs and LEAs in the region. Through its Publishing and Quality Assurance Department, SERVE publishes a variety of studies, training materials, policy briefs, and other products of the programs. These informative and low-cost publications include guides to available resources, summaries of current issues in education policy, and examples of exemplary educational programs. Through its programmatic, evaluation, and publishing activities, SERVE also provides contracted staff development and technical assistance in many areas of expertise to assist education agencies in achieving their school improvement goals.

The SERVE head office is at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, with major staff groups located in Tallahassee, FL, and Atlanta, GA, and policy advisors in each state department of education in the region. Current and detailed information on any of the program and service areas noted here may be found on SERVE's site on the World Wide Web at www.serve.org.

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ASTF Acknowledgments

A Note of Thanks from Executive Director Anne Jolly

The Alabama State Teacher Forum gratefully acknowledges and expresses warm thanks to the many wonderful people and organizations who made these workshops and other ASTF events a reality.

To the following organizations and people who said, "Yes!" when we needed financial support, thank you for believing in classroom teachers:

The A+ Research Foundation
The Alabama Power Foundation
BE&K Engineering
ENERGEN Corporation
Edward M. Friend, III
The SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE)

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To **Dr. Ed Richardson**, Alabama State Superintendent of Education, thanks for listening to and believing in classroom teachers and for establishing an advisory committee composed of teachers.

To members of the **Alabama State Board of Education**, thank you for the time you've taken from busy schedules to attend and speak at our events and to listen to what teachers have to say.

A special thanks to **Terry Dozier**, Special Advisor to Secretary Richard Riley at the U. S. Department of Education. Thank you for giving us the idea for this teacher forum and for being a constant source of inspiration and support.

Finally, thanks to all of you who believe in classroom teachers, share our struggles and concerns, ask our input and advice, and work with us to prepare our children for their future.

ASTF was organized in 1994 by a group of former Alabama State Teachers of the Year. A major goal of this non-political, voluntary organization of practicing classroom teachers is to give teachers a voice in educational policy issues. ASTF communicates regularly with thousands of teachers through professional development events, the Alabama Teachers Listserv, and a Web page (www.astforum.org).

The 1998 Summer Forums

Facilitators

Anne Jolly
Former Alabama Teacher of the Year
8th Grade Science Teacher
Cranford Burns Middle School

Robin Litaker
Former Alabama Teacher of the Year
Elementary Physical Education Teacher
Trace Crossings Elementary

Bill Martin
8th Grade Science Teacher
Fort Payne Midle School

Mike Jones
Former Alabama Teacher of the Year
Social Studies Teacher
Athens High School

Catherine Rogers
1st Grade Teacher
Council Traditional Magnet School

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Baker High School

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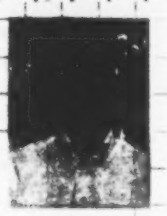

Steve Chapman
Program Specialist
SERVE

Donna Nalley
Senior Program Specialist
SERVE

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About the Summer Forums

Let's throw open the doors and windows of the little, red schoolhouse, and let the future come in.

—Forum Participant

The Alabama State Teacher Forum held two summer forums—one June 16, 1998, in Hoover (a suburb of Birmingham) and one June 18, 1998, in Mobile. Over 150 teachers participated in the day-long discussions which questioned, "What is the 'Dream School'?" and "How can we achieve our dreams?"

For these discussions, the facilitators acted as interviewers, and the participants functioned as the faculty—the ones with the answers. As Anne Jolly noted, "Teachers are our personnel on the front line. We need their voices in designing successful schools." The faculty considered roles and expectations for

Facilities, Operations, and Scheduling

Administration and Other Staff

Teacher Proficiency and Professional Development

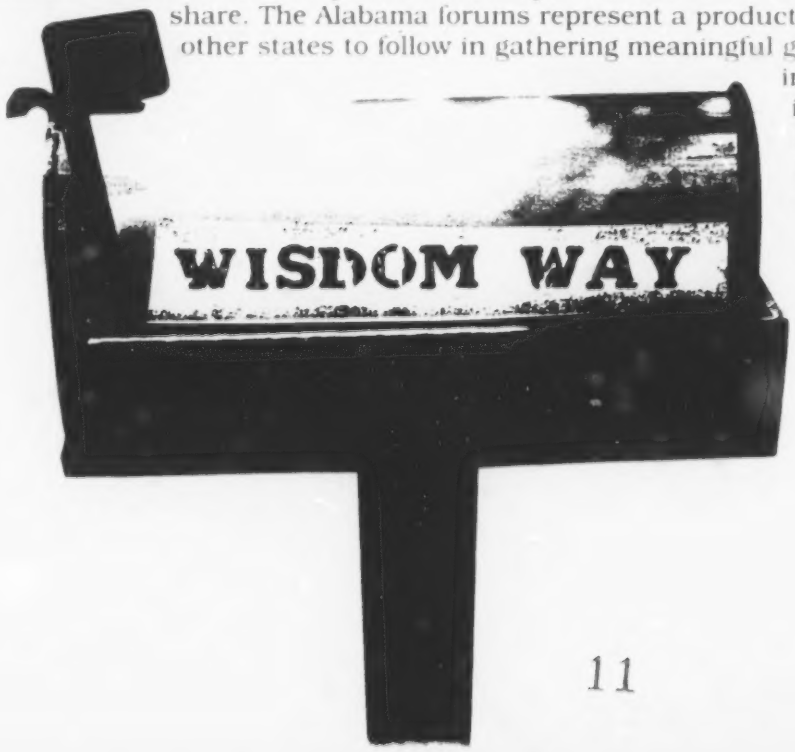
Curriculum

Climate

Students

Parents and Community

and much more. As you will see in the section entitled, "Teachers' Dreams," forum participants allowed themselves to think outside the traditional boundaries and express their visions for a better educational future. Their responses reverberate with truth for our educational system nationally, as theirs are dreams we all can share. The Alabama forums represent a productive model for other states to follow in gathering meaningful grassroots input on school improvement from classroom teachers.



dealized Design Theory

One who walks into the future facing the past has no control over where he is going.
—Russell Ackoff

Idealized design—or redesign—creates an ideal-seeking system, which is dynamic, effective, and easily modified to allow for experimentation and improvement. Idealization involves a process for planning which considers the whole system, not just isolated parts, for a greater potential effect. It invites participation from stakeholders who are potentially affected by changes because the system has a responsibility for serving their interests, and it includes specification of ultimate values and objectives, thus tending to generate consensus within the group.

The Alabama State Teacher Forum based their discussions on idealized design theory, asking participants to keep the following elements of idealization in mind while envisioning their dream schools:

> Ideal does not equal impossible. The design of the school must be feasible and viable—capable of operating if it did come into existence.
>
> Idealization encourages creativity in design because it frees participants from self-imposed constraints. It invites ingenuity because it focuses on the ideal.
>
> The idealized design converts planning from a retrospective to a prospective orientation. It is proactive rather than reactive; most system redesign is reactive—busy identifying current system deficiencies. It is essential to stay focused upon the ideal; otherwise, discussions can easily degenerate into gripe sessions about current system failures. **Proactive design moves toward what one wants—not away from what one does not want.**

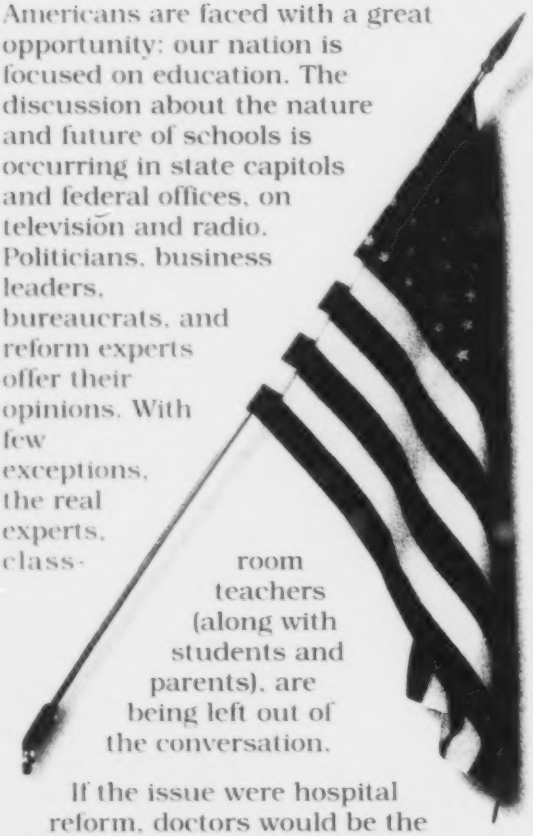
The hope is to produce a design that will act as a mobilizing idea that initiates an improvement process.

Philosopher Ortega Gasset comments on the power of an idea:

Man has put himself to work for the sake of an idea, seeking by magnificent exertions to arrive at the incredible. And, in the end, he has arrived there. Beyond all doubt, it is one of the vital sources of man's power, to be thus able to kindle enthusiasm from a mere glimmer of something improbable, difficult, and remote.

By ASTF President-Elect Bill Martin

Americans are faced with a great opportunity: our nation is focused on education. The discussion about the nature and future of schools is occurring in state capitols and federal offices, on television and radio. Politicians, business leaders, bureaucrats, and reform experts offer their opinions. With few exceptions, the real experts, classroom teachers (along with students and parents), are being left out of the conversation.



If the issue were hospital reform, doctors would be the primary consultants. If the issue were legal reform, lawyers would provide most of the ideas. However, in the case of school reform, the last group to be consulted is teachers—the very people that hold the key to the educational experience of children.

The Alabama State Teacher Forum (ASTF) is committed to giving teachers a voice—to serve as an avenue between policymakers and classroom practitioners. This was a primary purpose for the meetings in Hoover and Mobile in June of 1998—to gather ideas from teachers about what schools could and should be.

Yet there was more to the design of these meetings. By framing the question, "What is the dream school?" we forced ourselves to create a positive future vision—something we are more likely to work for if we have an idea of what it should be. Additionally, we tried to model the process a school or community might use to brainstorm possibilities for their own educational programs.

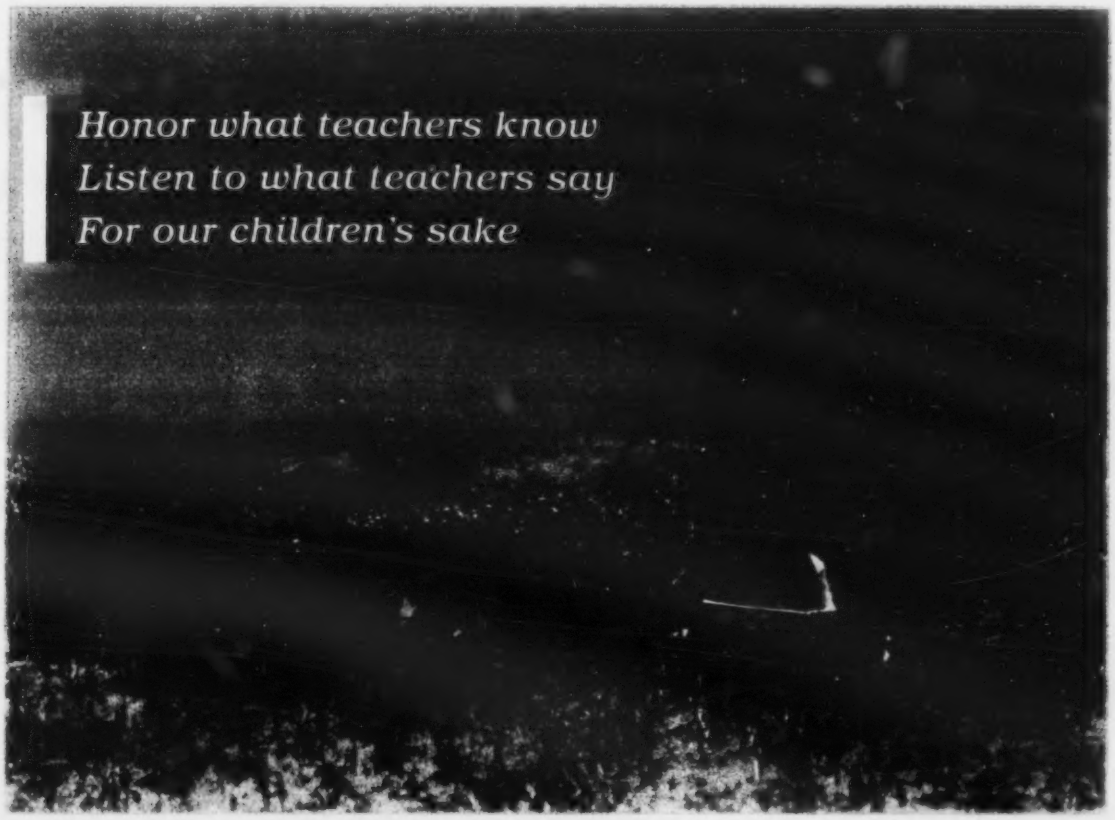
I call to your attention an experiment that was lost in the shuffle of World War II—*The Story of the Eight-Year Study* by W. M. Aikin (Harper Brothers). This study involved 30 schools and 1500 students. The design of the study allowed each school to develop their own program for educating their students, resulting in the evolution of 30 different designs. The graduates of these high schools did better than their controls in every field of study, notably in English, humanities, physical science, and mathematics. Obviously, teachers can help their communities develop better schools! Our designs and dreams are valid and substantive.

In a mid-90s study by Public Agenda, teachers across the country cited inadequate resources, families in turmoil, and arrogant administrators as their major challenges. But what caught my attention was a comment from a teacher who said, "It's not schools that are broken; it's the society. Schools simply reflect the society." Certainly, there is some truth in the statement, but are we merely a mirror? I think we cannot afford to be. Schools must be the lens through which we shape the future.

These summer forums focused on the crafting of that lens which allows us to see what it is possible to become. Meetings were structured to allow for both small- and large-group input. An open-ended brainstorm approach was used to gather ideas. This is, in my opinion, exactly the process that needs to happen in every school, bringing in all the voices of the community—the full 360.

My hope is that the Hoover and Mobile meetings stimulated teachers not only to think and dream but also to act. It's my dream that teachers, as professional facilitators, will take the lead and organize these sorts of conversations within their individual educational communities. Imagine teachers leading the way to successful schools that inspire students, parents, and staff. If we believe in ourselves, students and communities may learn from our example.

Dreams are powerful. A dream led my wife Nancy and me to live and teach in a beautiful corner of Alabama on Lookout Mountain. We have a small farm and live in a house we designed and built with the help of many friends. As my friend Delmous Brewster says, "There's a lot of work in a dream." And, I'd agree there is. Making dreams come true is a long-term process that requires commitment. Imagining is an important first step and only one of many to bring our visions into reality.



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Comments from State Board Members

I consciously chose and prepared for a challenging, demanding career in education because I believe learning is a lifelong process and that all children can learn if given the resources and opportunity. Along the way, each of my employment opportunities has been an important aspect in preparing for my present tasks on the State Board. My training and experiences have taught me always to put children first when considering controversial issues and making difficult decisions. Seeing a student achieve success makes every effort worthwhile.

—Ethel Hall,
State School Board
Vice President

Ethel Hall, the luncheon speaker at the Hoover forum, noted that while many people are surprised that a school board member can actually teach, she feels right at home leading a classroom of students. In fact, she expressed a deep connection and empathy with all teachers as a result of a career teaching all levels of students—from elementary to college.

Ms. Hall covered several items that need to change in order to improve children's education. Most importantly, she feels that everyone must increase expectations of students. Too often, she explained, we base expectations on students' socio-economic backgrounds. These increased expectations would include graduation requirements, exit exams, new courses of study, and the no-pass/no-play rule. She also discussed diversified program offerings, such as occupational diplomas, career/technical diplomas, and dual enrollment.

Ms. Hall acknowledged that some ideas may seem like a dream—things such as increased community involvement, lower pupil/teacher ratios, and more opportunities for professional development. However, she closed by stressing the importance of collaboration: by working together and insisting that teachers play a part in the decision-making process, many dreams may become a reality.

My wife Rebecca and I have four children, all of whom are public school students. Each of my children, and every child in the state, deserves the best possible education we can provide them because without one, they will not be able to participate fully in the economy of the 21st century or enjoy a high quality of life. My service on the Board represents my commitment to see that each of my children and every child in this state has a real opportunity to obtain the best education we can provide.

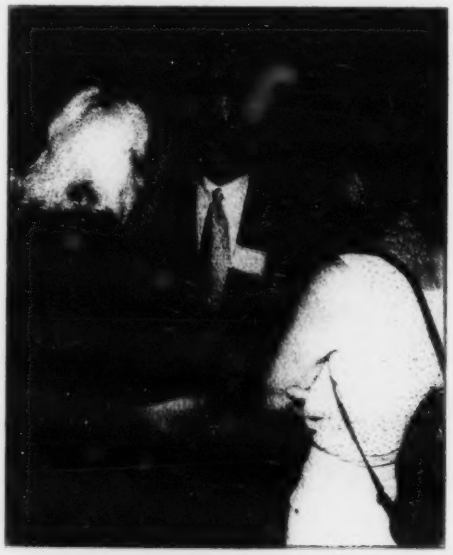
—Bradley Byrne,
State School Board Member

Bradley Byrne, the luncheon speaker for Mobile's forum, commented on how people ruminate about the "Golden Age of Education," but that such a thing is pure myth when you consider how two-thirds of students in the 1950's and 60's dropped out of school. He noted that an important goal is to increase public confidence in education, but he also addressed the need to realign standards and re-assess programs.

Mr. Byrne discussed the following items of concern:

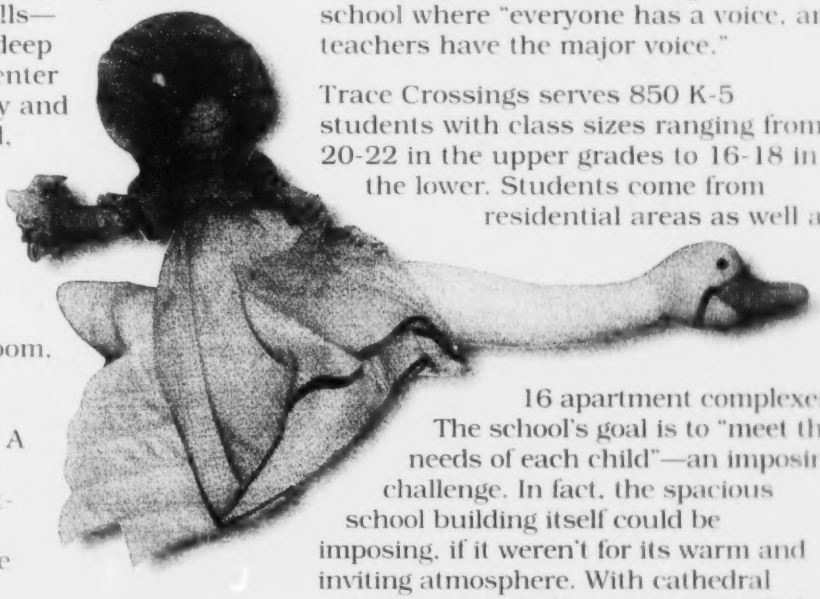
- Reporting serious discipline problems to administration
- Familiarizing teachers with all of the laws on safety and discipline
- Mandating background checks on all new teachers
- Implementing mentor programs for all new teachers
- Establishing an in-class evaluation system
- Increasing professional development funding
- Increasing schools' financial accountability
- Reducing class size

Mr. Byrne expressed enthusiasm and resolve to effect educational change, even offering his work phone number to participants who might have questions or concerns as well as his home phone number for teachers who had a problem that needed to be addressed immediately.



Spotlight on a Dream: Trace Crossings Elementary School

Visitors to this elementary school at once notice a vibrant, creative atmosphere, with living trees and a gigantic stained glass window in the foyer. Colorful paintings and displays dot the walls—some of which are deep violet. The media center is also imaginatively and colorfully decorated, and it boasts an extensive collection of learning materials. There is a spacious gymnasium—and, yes!—an exercise room, too, complete with stairmasters and stationary bicycles. A photographic dark room and a student-grown greenhouse garden complete the picture.



Wait a minute . . . could this all be just a dream?

"If Trace Crossings is a 'dream school,' it's because we involve so many people in making decisions," Principal Dot Riley notes. "Although the principal takes responsibility for decisions, I feel comfortable standing behind my teachers. The best decisions are the ones we agree on."

Dr. Dot Riley has worked at Trace Crossings Elementary since its inception six years ago in 1992. In 1998, she completed a doctorate in teacher leadership, and Dr. Riley's dissertation explored site-based management's premise of shared decision making at all levels—a topic that is key to the functioning of a school where "everyone has a voice, and teachers have the major voice."

Trace Crossings serves 850 K-5 students with class sizes ranging from 20-22 in the upper grades to 16-18 in the lower. Students come from residential areas as well as 16 apartment complexes. The school's goal is to "meet the needs of each child"—an imposing challenge. In fact, the spacious school building itself could be imposing, if it weren't for its warm and inviting atmosphere. With cathedral ceilings, well-lit halls, and colorful, kid-friendly decorations, Trace Crossings resembles an attractive, upscale mall designed for the under-12 set.

Dr. Riley says, "Every day that I come to work, I'm excited. It never wears off. The teachers are interested and absorbed in their work; the kids are happy and challenged. In fact, it's contagious! Our support staff—aides, custodians, lunchroom workers—are all excited about their work. I think it's because we really believe that everybody here is a teacher—no matter what the job title. We're all here to teach children."

The school boasts the Alabama Teacher of the Year for 1996-97, Robin Litaker, Trace Crossing's physical education teacher and sponsor of the school's juggling team. Two other teachers, Kay Emfinger and Tami Puchta, were

Presidential Award Winners for 1996-97 in Science and Mathematics through the Eisenhower Consortium, and in 1997-98, Trace Crossings teacher Misti McAdams received National Board Certification in Early Childhood Education.

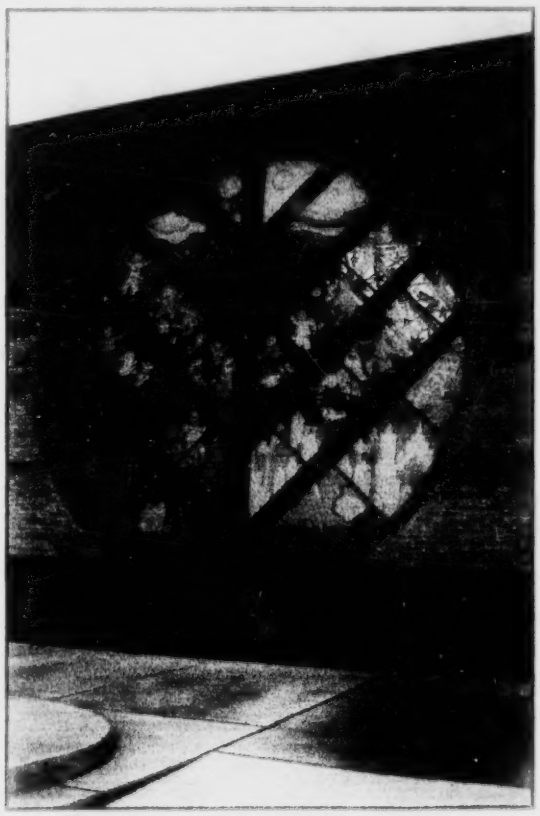
In addition to providing students with strong teaching, involved staff, and a stimulating environment, Trace Crossings Elementary focuses on the individual child and his or her needs. Each year, parents are requested to write a letter describing their children and their specific learning styles to help place them in appropriate classrooms. Classroom teachers read the letters and do the initial placement. The principal reviews the letters and placements and discusses individual cases with the teachers. Parents can be assured, Dr. Riley asserts, that the staff has worked hard to place children with the right teachers.

Parent involvement and support tends to be high, thanks in part to a strong PTO that encourages parents to volunteer and to drop in for a visit. Dr. Riley says, "Parents know that they are always welcome."

Of course, some parents may feel more "at home" at the school than others. One parent, for example, depended so much on the school and its staff, she called the receptionist one morning frantic for help. Her car had been stolen, and she didn't know what to do. The receptionist helped her calm down and then suggested the woman call the police and give them details on the missing car.

Now, that's being there for the community!

For more information on Trace Crossings Elementary, call Dr. Riley (205) 439-2700 or Robin Litaker (205) 439-2733.



Spotlight on a Dream: Cranford Burns Middle School

In his college education courses, teachers often posed the following question to Don Stringfellow and his classmates: "If you had a new school, what would you do?" Now he has the opportunity to show them as principal at Mobile's brand-new Cranford Burns Middle School, which will welcome over 600 students on September 1, 1998.

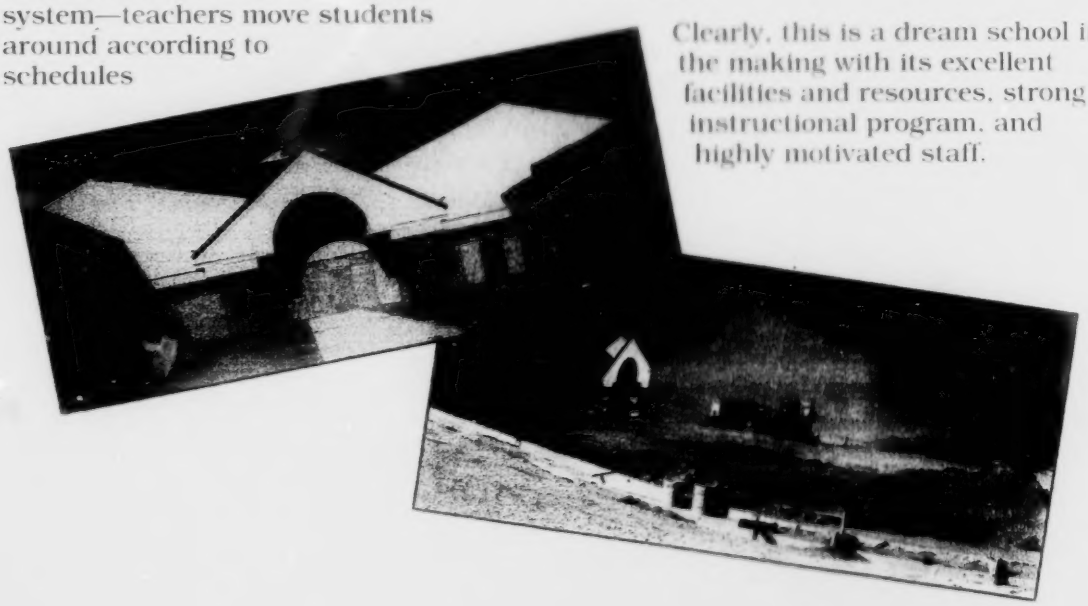
"What I envision," Principal Stringfellow comments, "is a school on the cutting edge—with the latest ideas in technology and instruction."

Cranford Burns Middle School is designed on the Model Middle School Program, which focuses on teaming of teachers. The layout of the facilities works with this approach. Pods of rooms are clustered around teacher workrooms, and there is no bell system—teachers move students around according to schedules which they have planned themselves within their team.

Teacher Phyllis Hartselle is excited about the personal challenge of working with middle school students in these cross-curriculum studies, and she is delighted that the school can offer students two copies of each textbook: one for school and one for home. This eliminates the need for lockers and book bags and—coupled with the teaming approach—helps with discipline problems and increases the school's level of security—a top priority these days.

Teacher Beth Snyder also sees the school as being "a safe place to enjoy learning." While she acknowledges that the idea of enjoying school may be quite foreign to some students, especially in our "quick-fix video-society," she hopes to succeed in "teasing them back to the books" with "interesting and relevant" materials.

Clearly, this is a dream school in the making with its excellent facilities and resources, strong instructional program, and highly motivated staff.



Trachy Miller, Librarian
Perdido Elementary/Middle School

On successful community involvement in schools:

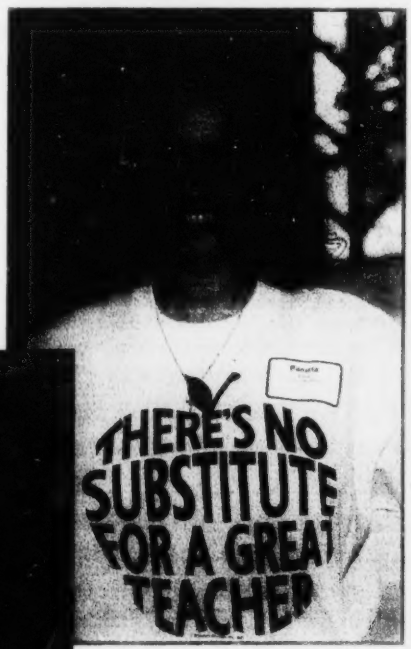
I am fortunate to serve in a K-8 school that is deeply supported by the surrounding community. Parents and local residents are very much involved in our activities—classroom events, fund raisers, sports events, and book fairs.

We are a primarily rural school with a racially mixed student population from low- to middle-SES backgrounds. Our principal, who encourages and enables community involvement within our school, is well-respected by his faculty, staff, students, and parents. Community members feel welcome at our school, where many come on weeknights to participate in GED classes, Weight Watchers meetings, and PTO-sponsored activities.

On teachers as leaders:

Our kindergarten staff began a project several years ago that has now become a model for a countywide program. Since our area is primarily on the lower end of the SES scale, our kindergarten teachers thought it would benefit many of their students to come to school for a few weeks in the summer prior to their kindergarten year. The children would have the opportunity to become familiar with school routines and their new teachers. Likewise, teachers could do some initial assessment of school readiness and more realistically plan for making the most of the upcoming academic year with these students.

What began as a voluntary effort on the part of the teachers has become an annual summertime project with Title I funding—and not only for kindergartners but also for older Perdido students who can benefit from math and reading remediation and skills retention during the summer break. Over the years, student achievement test scores for our whole student body have been on the rise. I believe this is a good example of what can happen when teachers are empowered as professionals!



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Anne Jolly, 8th-grade Science Teacher
Cranford Burns Middle School

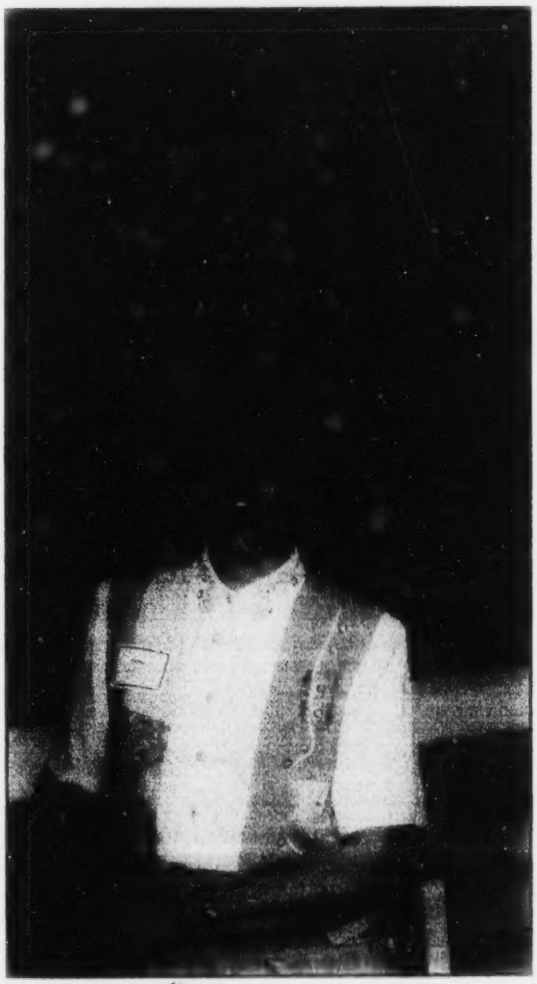
Early in my teaching career I realized that my students learn best when they know I care about them and enjoy teaching them. The teacher-student relationship is crucial to the learning process. At the middle school level, developing those personal relationships with students is challenging, at best. Students pass through my class in groups of up to 30 students at 50-minute intervals. Several years ago, I found a way to "connect" with more of my students on a regular basis.

The first day of school, I write my e-mail address on the board. I then collect e-mail addresses for all of my students who have these, and I add the addresses to my online address book. I also create a special online folder containing their e-mail addresses so that I can send everyone a "group" message occasionally. Sometimes I send the whole group a cheery hello, share something humorous, or give them a preview of something they can look forward to in science. At other times, I send individual students messages giving them a cyberspace pat-on-the-back for something well done, a word of support if they're having a hard time, or a message checking to see how they're doing when they are absent. I never use e-mail to chastise students or to make negative comments.

Students will often share feelings and events through e-mail that they don't have time to share during the hectic pace of the school day. One student e-mailed me that he was sorry he had not participated in class that day. His dog had been killed by a car the night before, and he couldn't think about much else. Usually, students just send me a breezy, "Hi, Ms. Jolly! See ya tomorrow!" Either way, that additional personal contact helps to build bridges and forge stronger relationships.

Today, I have former students in college as far away as California who still stay in touch through e-mail. They still share what's going on in their lives. I recently received an electronic message from a young man in his second year of college. He shared a list of the honors he's piling up and the multitude of career choices he has. Then he wrote, "I thought you'd like to know. I've decided what I want to do with my life. I'm going to be a teacher!"

Moments such as those make me thankful that I made that same decision. How I love this profession, with its amazing moments and its mind-bending challenges!



Vivian W. Simon
Baker High School
Marketing/Technical/Career Coordinator

On building relationships with students:

Have students write about themselves—basic information—likes, interests, family life, etc.; this will give the teacher some information about who they really are. This will also help the teacher identify potential problems that exist (that would influence their behavior). For example, the student may have a sick parent and be unable to deal with it and therefore may act out. The second idea along this line is for each student to prepare a poster about his or her life: family, values, career goals, and social activities.

Also, have students do weekly or daily journals that give them an opportunity to complain. However, they must use a structured format—defining the steps to resolving the problem. I also have them do a lot of cooperative learning activities so that they will respect the opinions of others and feel free to express their thoughts without ridicule.

Lennis Faye Russ
Robert E. Lee Elementary
3rd-grade Teacher

Family night idea:

At our school, parents and children are invited to use the computer lab on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 PM to 8 PM with faculty members available to lend assistance. The funding for this activity was made possible through a grant. (For more information, contact Media Specialist Jane Cunningham at 334-675-1210).

Susan Meredith Jordan
George Hall Elementary
3rd-grade Teacher

Mini-field trips:

Many of my students are only aware of their immediate surroundings, and experiences in other situations help them to understand more about the world. Examples include trips to grocery stores (social studies, math, science, English, reading), the woods (social studies, science), the mall, beaches (social studies, science), restaurants, etc.

Kathy Degnan
Semmes Middle School
7th-grade Computer Teacher

On discipline:

Student discipline (suspension, etc.) should be decided by the team teachers, not principals or assistant principals. A decision as to what to do with an individual student should be decided on by the teams, written up, and submitted to the principal. She/he should then sign to agree to the decision and if not, explain why.

On student service to school:

In order to create a sense of student ownership of the school—by class, grade, or individually—students would 'give' something back to the school. An activity, or elective period could be used to facilitate this. A survey or sign-up sheet with ideas/options could be used. Students would be asked to sweep/clean floors, tutor other students, answer phones, help file for teachers, work in the library or media lab, or do artwork/paint school.

William (Billy) Ramey
Alma Bryant High School
Math (Algebra I) Teacher

On schoolwide study hall:

For the last period of the day (30-40 min.), students should work on classwork/homework. Use seniors as tutors for one or two students during this schoolwide study hall period. This gives the underclassmen help with their work that may not be available at home. The seniors can work in terms of "Big Brothers/Sisters."

On an alternative to suspension:

Use county and city public works programs and law enforcement officials to put suspended students in community service instead of sending them home for several days in which they really get a holiday.

- Have suspended students report to school to be picked up by city or county authorities to be transported to different sites for community service.
- Give students/parents a choice in this (acceptance/refusal), but tie the decision to attendance. (Excused days for community service; unexcused days of absence for refusal, which can be dealt with by attendance authorities.)

Sheri Mullin
Baker High School (includes grades 7-12 as well as a regional school for the blind & deaf)
Speech and Drama Teacher

Her philosophy on education:

I am a learner as well as a teacher. The more I know, the better for my students. Improvement and growth is part of my philosophy. Improving education improves us all.

On school duty:

Society doesn't respect or support education as it should. Besides jury duty, let's have "School Duty" where parents serve a few days as substitute teachers in our schools. This would alleviate our search for substitutes, open parents' eyes to our objectives in education, and also drum up community support for tax increases which will provide funding to improve every aspect of the educational system in our country.

On portfolios:

Make each student count. Develop a portfolio on each student using parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and principals as 'guiders' of each child's education. Use a myriad of evaluations such as grades, the SAT, teacher comments, etc.

On planning time:

High school English and speech teachers need more planning time to grade/evaluate student writing. One reason teachers don't require a lot of writing is that it takes so long to effectively grade the work. Some places in Florida give all teachers a planning period, but those teachers who teach courses which require a lot of writing, two-to-three times a week, are given an extra planning period to grade and return the students' work.

Shirley M. Dean
Sylacauga City Board of Education
Science Coordinator
K-12
(Retired 5th-grade Science Teacher)

Math/Science suggestion:

I am presently designing a K-12 science curriculum based on the National Education Science Standards, so I suggest that math/science combination classes last twice as long because there is so much math in teaching science, and vice versa.

Polly Parrish
George Hall Elementary
Special Education Teacher

On parent/community involvement:

Our school, an inner-city school, worked with our partners in education to include them in parental involvement. We enlisted the local Boys and Girls Club as a partner in education. On the evenings our school sponsors a PTO meeting, the Boys & Girls Club runs buses to pick up parents to come to the meeting. Meetings are held in the afternoons at 5:00 p.m. while it is still daylight (for safety reasons) for those parents who walk to the school to attend the meeting. For those who prefer to ride, the buses run throughout the community and housing projects.

Reform begins with teachers:

I want to be involved in true educational reform. I do not believe change must come from the top down. Instead, for reform to be successful, I believe it must begin with teachers. Teachers must be proactive in dealing with the administration and community.

For example, working in an inner-city school, parental involvement can often be a challenge. I had a student, an eight-year-old boy, who was often a behavior problem. He was one of 11 children. His mother did not drive and could barely read. All attempts to communicate with the mother were unproductive. She was rarely home or would fail to return my phone calls.

After talking with the student a great deal, I noticed that an older brother's name kept resurfacing. I identified a strong bond that existed between the student and his older brother. This young man attended the high school one block behind our school. I waited for him one afternoon and struck up a conversation as he was walking home. We continued talking on a regular basis, and he began to help in my room in the afternoons.

Our relationship became the greatest motivator for better behavior in my student, who idealized this brother and all he did. If I had any problem, I could talk to the brother, and he would take care of it. I also would share when my student was making great progress. The older brother kept me informed about home life and gave me a clearer picture of my student.

When I was a youngster, there was a yard in my neighborhood where all the kids congregated. It was in shambles—toys scattered everywhere and dead grass because of it. One day the owner of the yard was asked, "Can't you take better care of your lawn? It looks awful!" to which the man replied, "No, I'm not going to grow grass. I'm going to grow kids."

—Bill Martin, Fort Payne Middle School

Children are the reason we dream of school improvement. Teachers, staff, parents, and communities are trying to "grow kids"—children who will one day be the leaders of this country and the inheritors of our hopes and dreams. Can we afford not to be idealistic when this responsibility for their future is placed into our hands?

Teachers realize the importance of the charge. English teacher Pam Harris (Guntersville High School) asserts, "Education must truly become a priority—not simply vacuous rhetoric in a political platform. It must be a priority in every home." Media Specialist Trachy Tew Miller agrees, "Every citizen has a vested interest: taxes! Education should be a top priority for everyone."

When we asked teachers at the forums, "What do you want or need in your school?", they responded with enthusiasm and candor. For example, second-grade teacher Kathy Hanscom (B. C. Hill Elementary) says, "I want to get accountability from parents. And I want administrators to work in the classrooms before they put those great 'paper' ideas into the school. But to truly improve schools, the entire community must be involved in restructuring." Melinda Nock, an itinerant teacher of the health-impaired, agrees that "parents and the community, including businesses, have a wealth of ideas and information that we are not fully utilizing. We must remember that education includes 'the whole village.'"

Forum teachers allowed themselves to look beyond the reality of the "dead grass" to the ideal of "growing kids" and to imagine the school of their dreams. Special education teacher Tracy Wall (Fairhope Middle School) comments, "It's important now and then to step away from the activities of life to develop a vision for what we would like to accomplish." Third-grade teacher Margaret Stewart (Nan Gray Davis Elementary) agrees, "We will never achieve a dream we haven't dreamed."

So, we present their hopes and dreams to you. Perhaps you will find that you have similar desires for school improvement, and you may be encouraged and inspired to dream even bigger! Read on to see what these forum participants had to say about the school of their dreams....

Two themes emerged from the Alabama discussions

- The pressing need for improved school resources
- The positioning of schools as the center of the community

In terms of upgrading school resources, discussions tended to focus on three areas of concern

- Personnel
- Time management
- Facilities

Site-based decision making was generally seen as the ideal form of team leadership. Kindergarten teacher Leslie Edwards (Wilmer Elementary) comments, "Schools should have a business manager, curriculum specialist, and human resource person—these people should be a team at the school, instead of all decisions falling on the principal." Other personnel suggestions included

- Administrators who are good "people managers" as well as "resource managers"
- A full-time registered nurse
- Counselors specializing in a specific age group
- Additional counselors (with aides for paperwork)
- An in-house psychometrist
- A person to handle only discipline/safety issues
- An intervention team
- A public relations person
- At least two media specialists
- Volunteers from law enforcement
- Full-time art, music, and computer teachers
- Full-time classroom and lunchroom aides
- Secretaries for teachers
- Hiring committees for new teachers made up of current faculty
- Mentors for new teachers

Teacher training, mentoring, and professional development were also large concerns in the area of upgrading school personnel. Pre-service training and mentoring of new teachers was endorsed by all small groups. Seventh-grade history teacher Brenda Shaddix (Duran Junior High School) comments, "Colleges of Education should employ experienced classroom teachers as instructors. As well, college professors should be required to teach in the regular school classroom each year. Also, all new teachers need mentors and orientations to prepare them for their classroom work."

Mentor programs were cited frequently as a necessary resource by forum participants; many called for a support team to be convened and financed by the school to train mentors, create an orientation program, support collaboration

with other schools for observing successful classrooms, allow time for mentoring, and offer release time for those who function as mentors.

Forum participants also supported personal professional development plans for all teachers for each school year, focusing on strengthening areas of weakness by engaging in practical, school-financed courses, seminars, conferences, in-service programs, and teaming for sharing and problem-solving. Teacher Brenda Shaddix asserts, "School systems should be required to allow teachers time off for professional development. This development should be adequate for all grade levels and all subject areas."

Pre-service and in-service training are necessary to keep oneself current. Some groups proposed adding in-service technology programs to update teachers' expertise with current technologies. As counselor Cassandra Fincher Fells (West End High School) notes, "It is important to understand that you cannot teach today's youth with yesterday's tools. Innovative teaching methods and strategies should be incorporated to increase curriculum integration."

One discussion group in Hoover developed the following list of curriculum concerns and expectations:

Teaching Students to Think: Curriculum to Meet the Needs of the Student Community

Integration of technological studies and academic studies—strategies incorporated into each discipline can augment the teaching/learning for both

Opportunities for students to observe schoolwide adult cooperation through cross-curriculum studies—realizing that success comes from working together and developing respect for human dignity

Widespread employment of higher-order thinking skills in curriculum

Implementation of research studies on the brain and learning

Creation of an atmosphere where all students feel they can learn and are an essential part of the whole

Combination of hands-on activities with teaching the abstract

Variety of teaching strategies

Valuing of the arts in addition to technology—this is part of the whole child

Provision of co-op programs for students

Availability of conflict resolution/ mediation program

Emphasis on expecting excellence

Other groups suggested themed projects and multi-age classrooms. Others identified the need for more vocational training and emphasis on life skills. Biology and anatomy teacher Marsha Hollinger (Daphne High School) comments, "We need to see more courses offered for average to below-average students—they also need to be able to choose from courses they may be interested in to further their education (for example, mechanical drawing)."

Most participants advocated portfolio and other alternative assessments and deplored standardized testing. Retired fifth-grade science teacher Shirley Dean explains, "We need less emphasis on standardized testing and more emphasis on teaching for understanding. It is much better to test what is taught than to teach what is tested."

Time management was cited as a key to more efficiency: teachers wanted more uninterrupted quality teaching time. This would mean no off-task duties, like hall or lunchroom duty, and would free-up time to meet with each other to share ideas, discuss problems, and get help or to visit other schools or to attend seminars. Most important of all, teachers wanted to be seen as professionals—such as college professors whose only job is to teach.

As professionals serving tomorrow's leaders, most teachers believed that they deserved more than just "adequate" facilities. Most groups dreamed of having faxes, copiers, computers, and telephones in each classroom, but they agreed to accept having them scattered throughout the school at convenient locations. Here is the wish list from one forum group for equipment and facilities:

Safe, comfortable, inviting facilities

Multiple labs (computer, science, math, reading, etc.)

Networked classrooms

Multiple copy machines per grade level

Telephones with faxes and voicemail

Sinks, restrooms, and storage closets in larger classrooms

A teacher resource center

An updated media center

A staffed health center

A multi-purpose room to accompany a stocked gymnasium

A "chill-out" room for discipline problems

Team or grade-level meeting rooms

Safe buses with cameras and aides

In addition to expressing their desires for upgrading school resources, forum teachers discussed their dream of the school functioning as the center of the surrounding community. Federal Programs Consultant Frances Cooley vividly expresses the need for parent and community involvement in schools:

> *To those who say we should keep parents and the community out of the schools, I reply, "If you see these essential individuals as flies—to be kept out—consider my mother's adage, 'You catch more flies with honey than vinegar.'" But, as a child, I often wondered, "Who wants to catch flies?"*

As I matured as an educator, mother, and grandmother, I realized the power of the wisdom that Mama was instilling. And as a retired teacher, I will this wit and wisdom to those continuing to operate on the peaks and in the valleys of the teaching-learning spectrum. Spoon-feed all education publics with honey instead of vinegar. It has been proven to make the medicine of achieving global learning for all students a palatable, nourishing, and positive intellectual growth adventure!

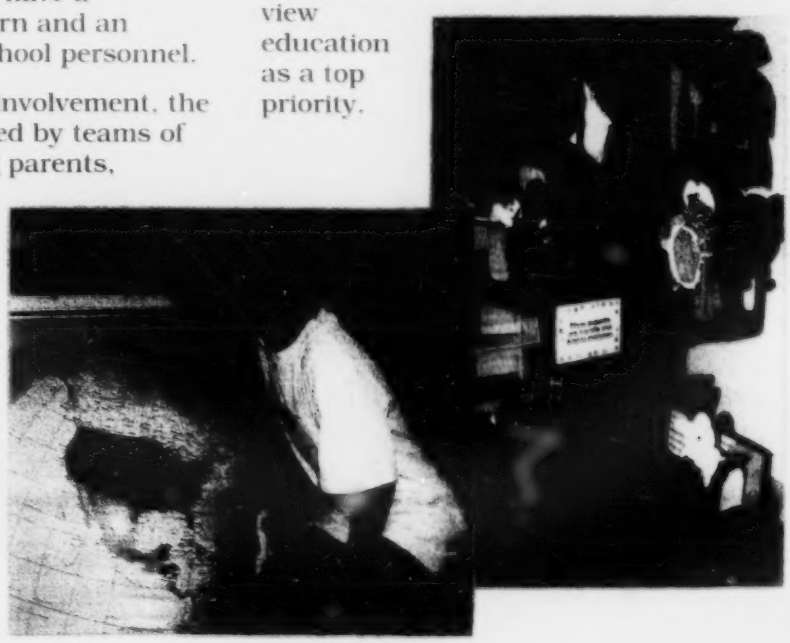
Educational Talent Search Advisor Larry Gafford agrees, "Parents need to be involved in schools—able to observe—involved in ways other than just bringing complaints. Parents need to realize that students are learning about the world, and too often parents feel that their world stops at the county or state line." But in this dream school, parents and other community members would volunteer in classes as aides and as presenters in their own areas of expertise. In addition to improvements in discipline, an extra benefit of their presence would be that students would see adults participating in an educational setting and have a heightened desire to learn and an increased respect for school personnel.

Furthering community involvement, the school would be managed by teams of professionals, including parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and even students, with rotating memberships to allow everyone to have input. A school and community newsletter would go out once a week with updates on events, activities, ideas, and concerns to keep everyone informed.

In order to function as the community center, the school would need to be open early and close late to be available to the public and for flexible school schedules that would match working families' needs. Attractions like chess clubs, parenting classes, and stock-market discussion groups would draw interested community members. A year-round calendar and two-shift day were supported by most forum participants, with the provision for flexibility and assistance for those teachers who wanted or need to be off to take classes.

For convenience and centrality, the public library and community recreation centers could be located at the school, along with other resources, like a parent-resource room and day-care centers. The school would solicit partnerships with community groups, businesses, colleges, or other agencies—not just for funding and free speakers, but for internships and real-world assignments and projects.

The idea of the school as the center of the community hinges on the buy-in of all community members: if all are involved and feel a sense of ownership, then everyone in the community would view education as a top priority.



Frances H. Cooley, a Hoover Forum participant and Consultant to the Federal Programs School Support Team, summarizes participants' "Achieving the Vision" comments in the following on "The Dream School—How Do We Get There?"

I. **Study funding resources, exhaust possibilities**
   - A. Eliminate inequities in funding—equal access to educational dollars
   - B. Look beyond property taxes

II. **Increase time allotted for learning**
   - A. Provide staff development during supervised, meaningful homework sessions
   - B. Let compulsory attendance extend to kindergarten and up
   - C. Study alternate scheduling possibilities for school day and year

III. **Upgrade teaching conditions**
   - A. Release teachers from non-teaching duties such as lunch, bus, hall, and bathroom duty
   - B. Develop uniform standards for class sizes

IV. **Review preparation required for new teachers**
   - A. Consider national standards for teachers
   - B. Develop a mentoring program

V. **Develop schoolwide student behavior standards**
   - A. Provide opportunities for developing the discipline of independent study through requiring meaningful homework beginning and increasing throughout elementary and secondary schools
   - B. Educate parents to the need for monitoring TV and Internet use
   - C. Involve teachers, parents, and significant adults in stay-in-school/complete-school strategies
   - D. Employ consistent discipline standards

VI. **Review curriculum development**
   - A. Make flexible to meet local needs, yet focused on skill development for global functioning
   - B. Integrate technical and academic studies

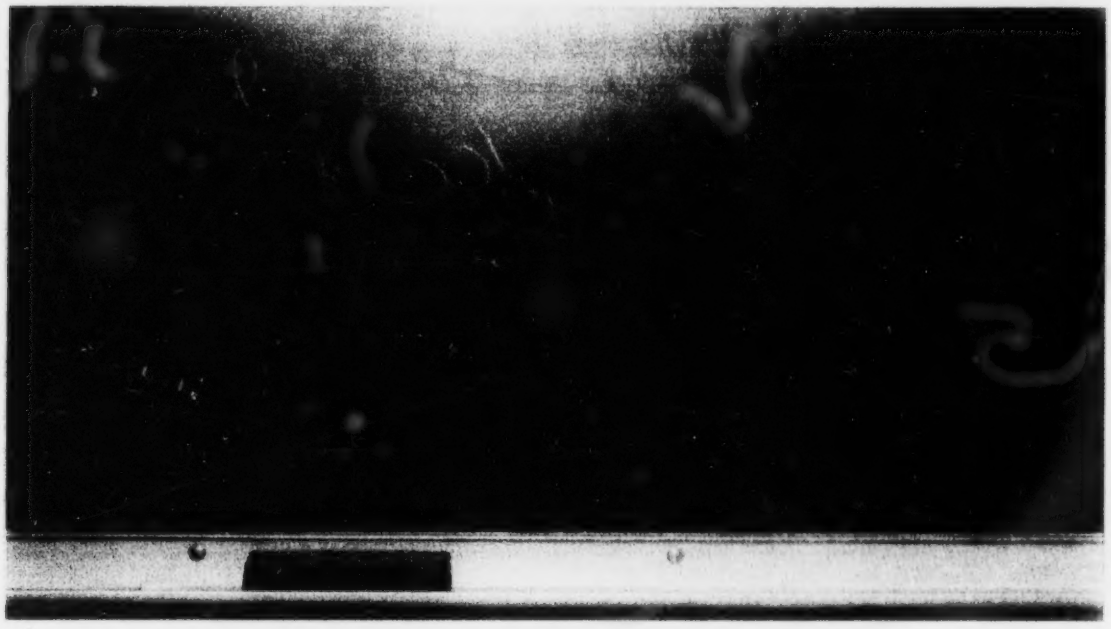
VII. **Update student assessment**
   - A. Move beyond multiple-choice tests to essays, demonstrations, oral exams, higher-order thinking skills, map/graph reading, etc.

VIII. **Review education governance**
   - A. Consider standardization for school systems across the nation
   - B. Infuse local (parent/community) feedback with national standards
   - C. Establish a parallel for standards required of public and private instructional systems

IX. **Improve parent and community involvement**
   - A. Consider a goal for the percent of literacy for citizens and work toward accomplishing that goal
   - B. Focus on quality parenting in the broadest sense
   - C. Work toward goal of high parent and community involvement in school

At the conclusion of the forums, most participants were pleased with what they had accomplished in their small and large groups and hoped to be able to see some of their changes implemented. Third-grade teacher Susan Meredith Jordan (George Hall Elementary) hopes "to see a change in the way schools are run and organized." She writes, "Thank you for allowing teachers a voice and not just an ear." Second-grade teacher Marlene Stroud (Oneonta Elementary) says, "Please, let's continue these forums of ideas. The concept of grassroots change is powerful! I am excited about the future of education if this continues."

But first-grade teacher Beverly Gandy (Meadowlake Elementary) wonders, "At this point I've dreamed...now, who will listen? Who will act on our dreams and suggestions?" Hopefully, readers of this document will act on some of these excellent ideas. Also, discussions need to continue throughout schools and communities—with or without organized forums—and teachers need to speak up with their insightful ideas on change.



What follows is a personal planning section that allows you to create your own vision of the school of your dreams....

Your Personal Planning Section

Imagining, Organizing, and Achieving Your Vision of the Dream School

My ideal school would be a group of people working together in a happy, caring environment, fostering a life-long love of learning. It would include an adequate facility with well-trained teachers, involved parents and community, no funding problems, a consistent approach to discipline, and a curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

—Margaret Stewart,
Nan Gray Davis Elementary

Dear Reader,

You are invited to dream along with us....

You may choose to work through this section alone to create your individual vision of the dream school, or you may wish to complete this planning section together with a team from your school for a shared vision for school improvement.

First, ask yourself:

"What is the school of my dreams?"

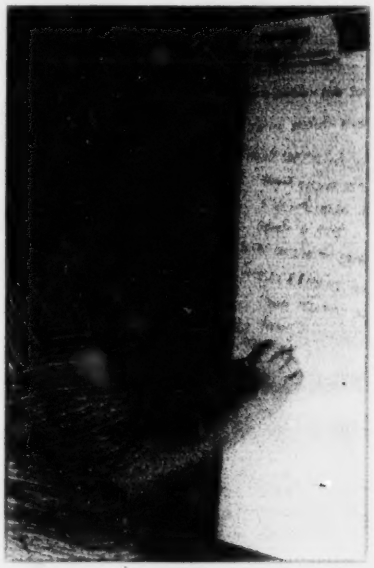
Do not limit your vision with negatives like "there isn't enough money to achieve my dream," or "the principal would never share his power with the teachers."

Instead, allow yourself to visualize *the ideal.*

Forum participant and fourth-grade teacher Gwen McCorquodale (South Shades Crest Elementary) explains how difficult this can be in the following comment:

I am disappointed in how we limit ourselves: so many of the factors we discuss are "improvements" on existing programs in schools and not "dreams" with vision for the future. Can we not soar above the ordinary wish list for the present? The thinking that can evolve from "changing" instead of "fixing" could be most productive. While any discussion empowers and can lead to deeper understanding, we need to focus on the dream....

And we must remember that to dream is the first step in many leaps that lead to change.



Are you ready to dream? If so, turn the page to your first step on the road to change....

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Assignment #1: Imagining the Ideal

As a warm-up exercise, please freewrite for 5-10 minutes on the words: "the ideal school" or "the dream school." Use the space provided to jot down whatever ideas come into your head during this time. Do not edit your thoughts or words. Do not stop writing until time is up.

What is the focus of your dream school?

Now, look over what you have written. What did you write? Anything surprising?

Please complete the following sentences:

It is interesting that many of my ideas concern

I was surprised to see

At this point, I would define the dream school as

Assignment #2: Ideal Roles

Please describe ideal roles and expectations for the following people:

Consider leaders, instructors, support personnel

Students

Counselor

Teachers

Nurse

Principal

Cafeteria Staff

Assistant Principal

Custodial Staff

Front Office Staff

Media Specialist

Tutorial/Remedial Staff	**Community**
Other Resource People	**District/County Administrators**
Parents	**Other (please identify)**

Now, please describe how you would like these people to work together. Consider leadership/management issues. How should various decisions (hiring, discipline, testing, placement, curriculum, scheduling, etc.) be made?

Assignment #3: Ideal Resources

Please create a detailed "shopping list" of what you would like to have in the dream school as resources.

Facilities

Consider classrooms and other areas

Describe the ideal elements for each of the following, and then add other facilities you would like to have in your dream school (e.g., a student-run greenhouse and a petting zoo—yes! be creative!).

Classrooms

Science labs

Gym

Math Labs

Computers

Reading/Writing Labs

Art rooms

Health/first aid rooms

Music rooms

Cafeteria

Library

Other rooms/areas (please specify)

Counseling areas

Other physical resources not already mentioned (e.g., two sets of textbooks, telephones in classrooms, etc.)

Resource Personnel

Please describe resource personnel you would like to have available to you (e.g., a discipline specialist, a parent-involvement specialist, secretarial support, etc.).

Assignment #4: Ideal Time Management

Please comment on the following areas dealing with time management in the dream school:

How would you like to schedule the school day?

How would you schedule the school calendar?

What off-task duties would you eliminate, and how?

How would you make time for sharing and observing?

How would you make time for mentoring?

How would you make time for professional development?

Other time-management ideas or concerns?

Assignment #5: The Ideal Atmosphere

Please describe the ideal ***climate*** *and* ***culture*** *of the dream school. (Organizational climate refers to current feelings and attitudes about the organization—whether it is a positive place to live and work together or one that is full of problems. Organizational culture refers to the shared values and expectations held by the people who work in an organization.)*

What would the school's climate (e.g., enthusiastic, team-oriented) be like?

What would the school's culture (e.g., sharing and helping expected) be like?

What would the relationship between faculty and administrators be like?

What would faculty/staff attitudes toward students be like?

What would student attitudes toward teachers be like?

How would parents relate to teachers?

How would the community perceive the school?

How would safety issues be addressed?

Other atmosphere issues?

Assignment #6: My Ideal Classroom

What does your ideal classroom look like? Please describe it in detail or draw a picture here.

What would your students be like (attitude, behavior, motivation, etc.)?

What would students learn?

How would you test/assess your students?

What would be gained by this dream classroom that the traditional one could not achieve?

Assignment #7:
Achieving My Vision of the Dream School

Now, take a moment to look back over what you have written in this section, and then answer the following questions:

Now that I've analyzed the various parts of the dream school, how can I synthesize or bring them together to work as a whole?

Which things could be implemented right now with only a little work or adjustment needed?

What do we need to start working on now to implement other changes in the future?

What specific ideas or suggestions could I prepare notes on and bring up at the next staff or school improvement team meeting or send around in a proposal?

How could I organize small groups within my school to study potential changes?

How could I organize small groups within my school to set up mentors?

How could I organize small groups within my school to share teaching ideas?

How could I organize a day (or morning or afternoon) for staff at my school to "dream" together?

Other ideas for achieving my vision of the dream school:

Thank you for participating in dreaming with us. We hope that this planning section has been helpful in assisting you in expressing your dreams. If you would like to write to us at SERVE about your personal successes in school improvement, we would love to hear from you. Please send correspondence to Dr. Donna Nalley, Publications and Quality Assurance, 1203 Governor's Square Boulevard, Suite 400, Tallahassee, Florida 32301.

Example Proposal for a Dream School: The Fort Payne Learning Resource Center

by Bill Martin, 8th-grade Science Teacher Fort Payne Middle School

I have designed and proposed a dream school....

My system built a new school and is trying to sell the old one. Ideally located in the center of our small town, the old school was first opened in 1916.

However, my plan was returned by the superintendent with no comment. I requested the opportunity to explain the proposal to the board. I was granted five minutes at the board meeting. They were not interested. They saw the proposal as a private school in the public sector.

Is that what we want—to hold every student to the same level of mediocrity? Or do we believe that teachers are not capable of designing schools? Perhaps some of both....The school is still for sale. I believe in this dream school, and maybe one day schools like this will be a part of the educational landscape.

A Proposal for The Fort Payne Learning Resource Center (FPLRC) to be located at the current Forest Avenue School: A School of Choice for 200 committed students from Fort Payne and DeKalb County

- Requires students to serve two hours a day in the school and community, participate in four hours of challenging course work daily, and take advantage of internship, mentor/apprenticeship, and study programs
- Requires parents or adult sponsors to donate two hours per week or one day per month
- Includes amended yearly calendar (175 student days spread throughout the year), with three weeks off in the fall, spring, and at New Year's. Six weeks off in the summer
- Includes an extended daily schedule: school is open from 7AM to 7PM, with a flexible schedule for students and parents, and two overlapping eight-hour shifts for staff
- Employs teams involving students, parents, teachers, and community mentors which use test results and student accomplishments to design a personalized educational program

Imagine a high school where...

- Students learn by doing, and as a result, love to learn
- Academics are blended with business and community service
- Individualized programs are designed by students, parents, and teachers
- Every student is prepared for college, technical school, and work
- Students serve and learn in the work place and community
- Students manage and operate businesses
- Existing community resources are utilized and improved
- Every student is special
- Students, parents, and staff want (and choose) to be there!

Imagine a facility featuring...

- A Technology Center—serving the community as an on-ramp to the Information Super Highway;

developing school, community, and business Web pages; maintaining school business records; producing printed, audio, and video projects; marketing services and products

- **A Restaurant**—managed by students and staff, serving the school and community
- **A Store and Visitors Center**—selling student and regional products; educating the public about local resources and operated by students, parents, and staff
- **Shops and Studios**—producing student projects and maintaining and improving the facility
- **21st-Century Classrooms**—promoting strong academic achievement; exposing students to the region, state, nation, and world; designed to promote learning

Student learning programs

Every student would work with a team to design his/her own learning program. Program design and evaluation teams include students, parents or sponsors, faculty, and business/community mentors.

A strong academic program is supported by

- Business and work place experiences
- Performing and visual arts
- Multimedia productions
- Environmental monitoring and exploration

Course and classwork would be interesting and engaging. A full 4x4 curriculum (4 years each of math, science, language arts, and social studies) would be tailored by a dedicated staff to address student needs and interests.

Academics are integrated with four major strands that run through the high school experience. Business, arts, technology, and the environment are woven with academics to make classes applied, appealing, and challenging.

A yearly theme would allow courses to be integrated with each other and student work experiences

- Ninth grade—local theme
- Tenth grade—state theme
- Eleventh grade—national theme
- Twelfth grade—global theme

School-work experiences

- All students and staff are involved in school maintenance and cleaning
- Three in-house businesses are operated by the school: a technology center, a restaurant, and a store and visitors center—selling student products and regional items
- Community work experiences begin with visits from local business and community leaders to teach students how their industry, service, or agency operates. Students visit some of the participating businesses and agencies. After a field trip, students may apply to shadow an employee or serve an internship. Successful internships could lead students to apply for mentors or apprenticeships. Participating businesses would evaluate (and could reward) student achievement

School schedule

A student's day would typically include

- Four hours of classwork
- Two hours of school service (working in a school business or on maintenance)
- Two hours of study and/or intern/mentor/apprenticeship

A flexible 7AM to 7PM schedule

7:00AM—9:00AM Breakfast/aerobics/study halls with tutors/early classes

9:00AM —12:00PM Morning classes—a mixture of block, team taught, and traditional classes

12:00PM —2:00PM Long lunch—provides time for schoolwide programs and presentations, student design/evaluation team meetings, class projects, etc.

2:00PM —5:00PM Afternoon classes—a mixture of block, team taught, and traditional classes

5:00PM —7:00PM Dinner/aerobics/study halls with tutors/late classes

Students might design an AM/PM rotation—for example, apprenticing and doing their school service in the morning and taking classes in the afternoon. Or, students could mix work and class experiences.

Staff schedules would be 7AM—3PM or 11AM—7PM, with split shifts possible. They would work 175 days with students and be provided with at least five days per year for planning and development.

Evaluation and assessment

Teams would use a wide array of evaluations to design programs to meet individual student needs, address their interests, and promote their talents. All students would participate in the statewide testing program (standardized, graduation, and end-of-course tests). Additionally, all students would take college entrance tests including the PSAT, SAT, and ACT, as well as IQ, creativity, personality, interest, ability, and career/vocational tests and surveys.

However, test results make up only one part of a student's portfolio. Teams would use portfolios as a major evaluation tool. All products, records, projects, and accomplishments would be included in the portfolio. Some projects would be required for graduation; others would be self-directed. A portfolio would be maintained through high school.

Graduation and entry into college, technical school, or the work place would be expected of every student. Survey data would be collected from students for six-to-ten years after graduation. A major goal of the school is to help students procure scholarships, grants, and awards to attend the post-secondary school of their choice. Another goal is that students are successful in college or technical school and graduate. The final hope and measure of success for the FPLRC is that students make the transition to a fulfilling career and satisfying life.

Funding

Student dollars would be pushed down to the schoolhouse level for budgeting by the school community/council. With 200 students and only $3,800 per student per year, the $760,000 budget does not quite cover salaries. However, the profit potential for school businesses is quite good and should make up any shortfall after three years.

Seed money or start-up funds are needed to repair and remodel the facility; purchase equipment and materials for school businesses, shops, studios, labs, and classrooms; and make up for salary shortfalls until the school businesses show a profit. The needs would include approximately three million dollars over three years.

Possible funding sources

School Choice Program (from the U.S. Department of Education)

School to Work Program (U.S. Departments of Education and Labor)

AT&T and BellSouth as Internet/technology partners

This is my dream, but I believe it can become a reality....

Is Your School Organized for Success?

Check these 35 indicators to see if you have a high-achieving school:

1. Parents and school employees are committed to long-range, continuous improvement.
2. Central and building administration are committed to long-range, continuous improvement.
3. Goals for achievable education outcomes are clear and explicit.
4. Teachers, education support personnel, parents, administrators, students, school board, district administrators, and civic groups are all involved in improving education.
5. Teachers, education support personnel, students, and parents believe all students can learn.
6. School district administration and school boards believe all children can learn.
7. School is an overall learning environment for employees and students.
8. Teachers assess student improvement daily.
9. Administrators assess student improvement daily.
10. The school uses teacher-made tests to assess students.
11. The school uses oral classroom activities to assess students.
12. The school uses exhibitions to assess students.
13. Assessments take into account student background.
14. Academic programs are assessed.
15. Teachers consistently rate program quality.
16. Assessment results are actually used and classroom decisions are based on assessments.
17. Instructional materials are selected based on quality.
18. Instructional materials are selected based on appropriateness to student needs.
19. Instructional materials are not selected based on cost.
20. Space is adequate within the school building.
21. Supplies are adequate.
22. Support services are adequate.
23. Psychological and social work services are available.
24. School staff actively seek to identify barriers to learning.
25. Teachers work to remove barriers.
26. Education support personnel work to remove barriers.
27. Students and parents work to remove barriers.
28. School and district administration work to remove barriers to learning.
29. A cooperative problem-solving process is used to remove barriers.
30. There is ongoing, consistent staff development in the areas of decision making, problem solving, leadership, and communication.
31. Staff development is an ongoing, high-quality, state-of-the-art, practical experience for all school employees.
32. There is two-way, non-threatening communication between school employees and school administrators.
33. There is two-way, non-threatening communication between school employees and district administration.
34. There is two-way, non-threatening communication among teachers.
35. All communication takes place within a climate for innovation.

Source: Adapted from *NEA Today*, May 1995 issue, in which NEA researchers identified 35 indicators common to high-achieving schools.

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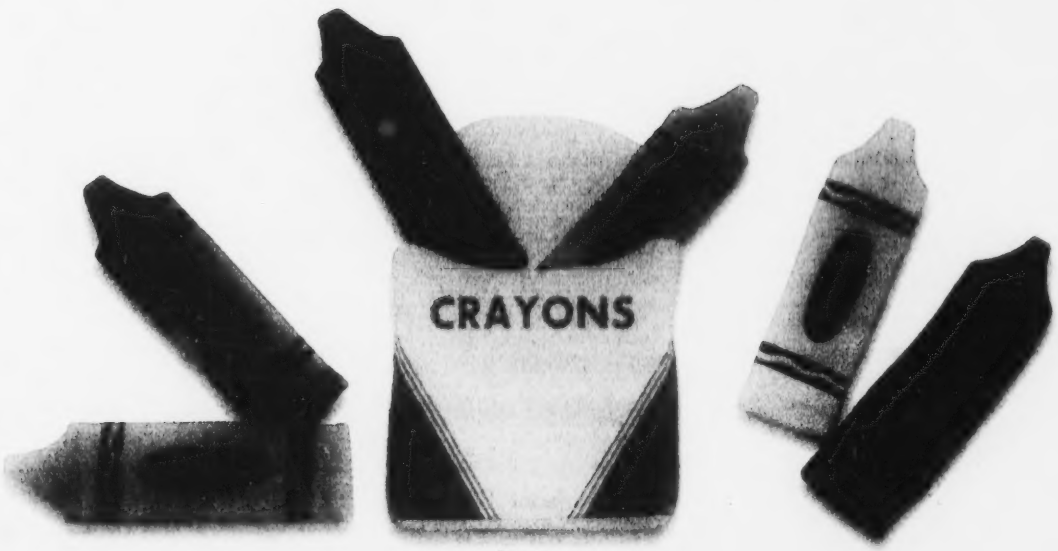
Notes and Additional Ideas



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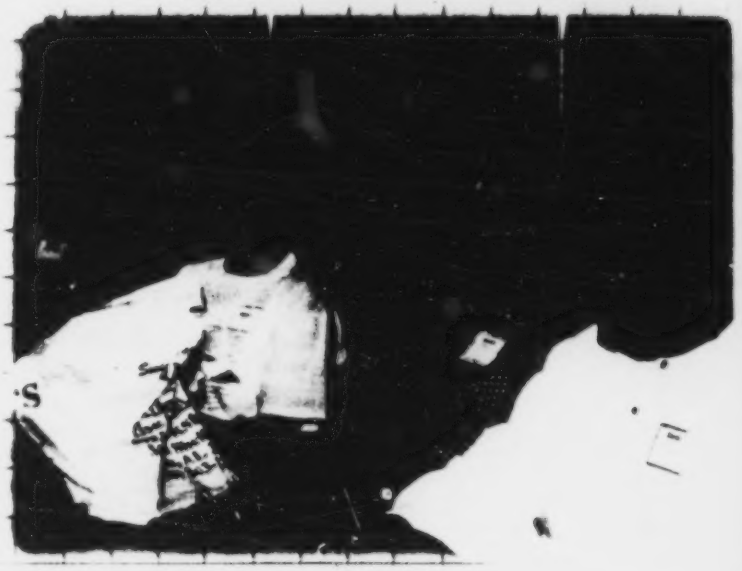
"I never know what is going to happen next. Each day is unique."

What do you love about teaching?

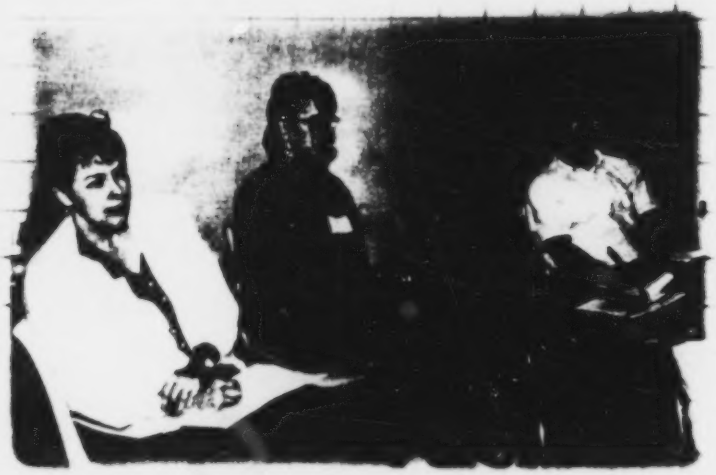
"Watching them grow."



"There's no other job that rewards you like teaching."

"Kids have always fascinated me. They come up with such interesting ideas and ways of looking at the world."

"It's neat learning how to teach—deciding a creative way to teach things."



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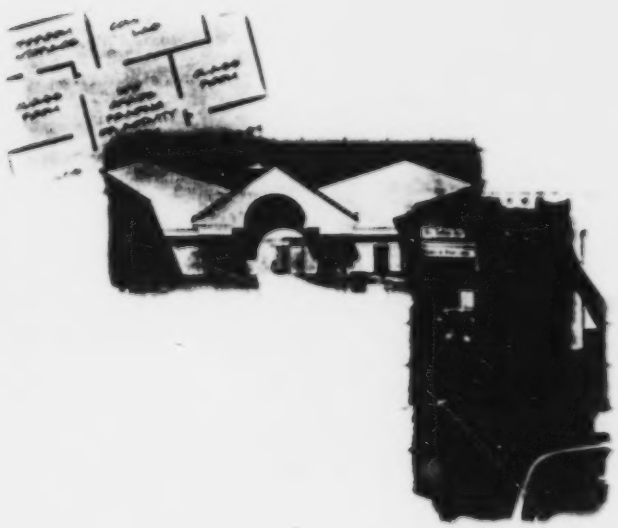
SHARING SUCCESS

Designing the School of Your Dreams

Designing the School of Your Dreams is a SERVE Sharing Success Publication created to broaden teachers', parents', administrators', and community leaders' visions of what a school can and should be. While visionary in its challenge to see beyond the walls of the traditional school to what is possible, *Designing the School of Your Dreams* is also practical in approach as it shares usable ideas and examples of successful implementations of these ideas. *Designing the School of Your Dreams* also includes a planning section designed to assist an individual or group in discovering their own personal vision of the ideal school. *Designing the School of Your Dreams* could dramatically affect school improvement at every level by encouraging its readers to envision the "Dream School" and to actively pursue their high expectations and goals.



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